LESSONS

BEGINNER

LEAD GUITAR 101

More Bending Madness

BY ANDY ELLIS

String bends and lead guitar go together like glowing power tubes and rock and roll. Because bending is such a crucial skill, we've devoted the last two installments of Lead Guitar 101 to the subject. If you've missed "Get a Grip on Two-String Oblique Bends" and "Wrenching Triple-String Oblique Bends," grab the April and May '05 issues and do a quick review. In this lesson, we'll add some new moves to the mix, and then flip oblique-bending theory on its head.

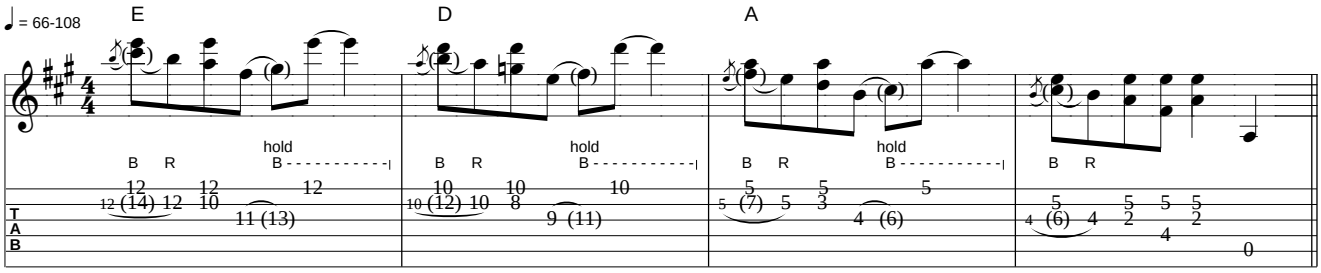
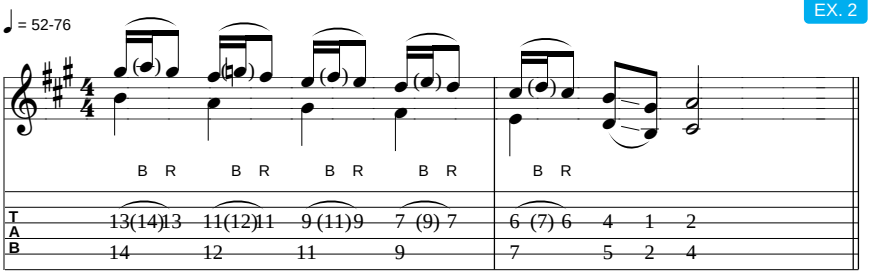
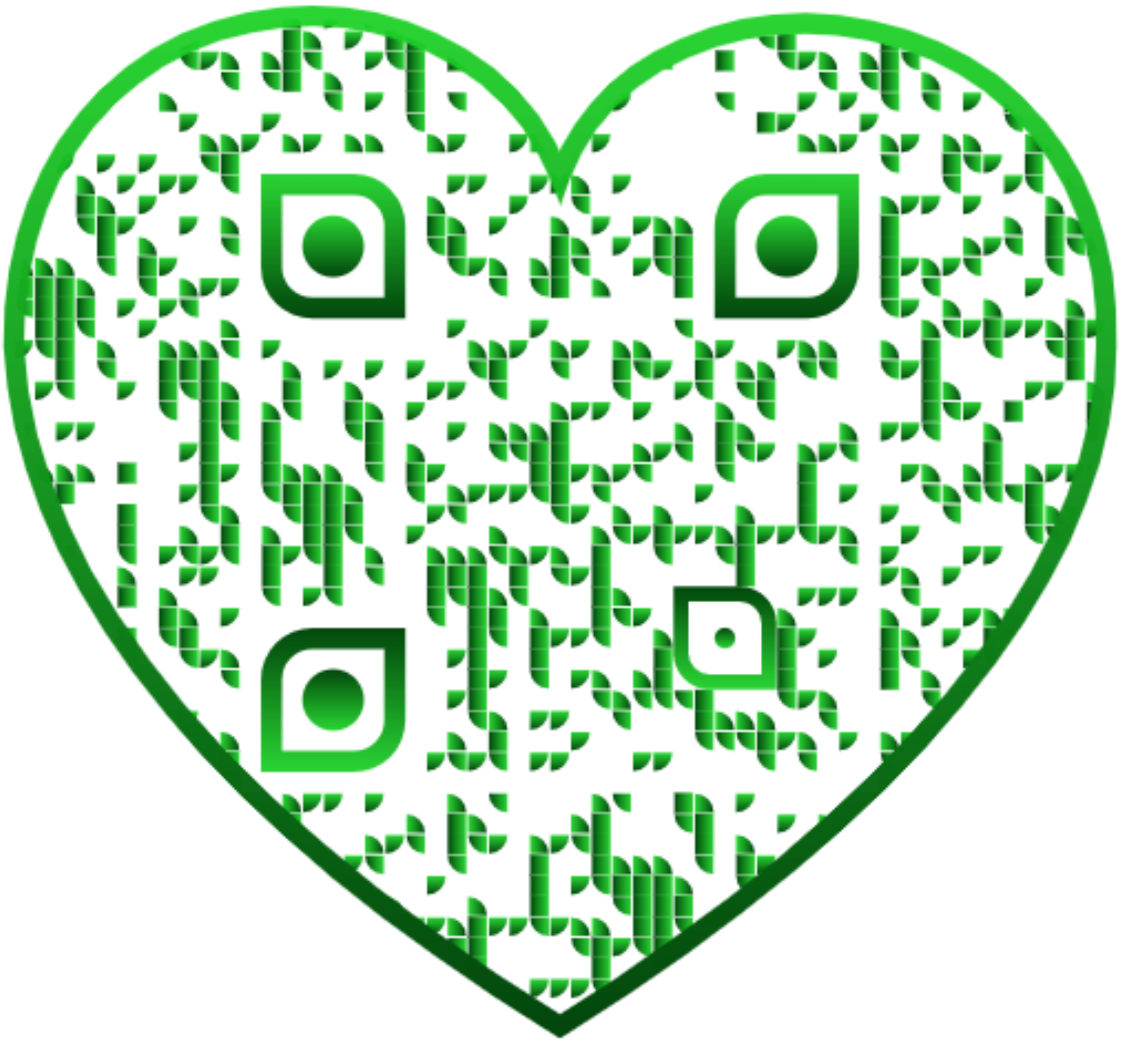
But first, let's recap: In a typical oblique bend, you sustain one or two notes on high strings while bending another note on a lower string. The tension that results from stretching a note against a stationary sonic backdrop makes oblique bending one of the most emotionally powerful techniques in guitardom.

A V-IV-I phrase in the key of *A*, Ex. 1 offers liquid, soulful sounds borrowed from pedal steel. This phrase would be equally at home in a Keith Urban country rocker or a sweaty Black Crowes ballad. In the last two beats of bars 1-3, sustain the whole-step bend on the third string as you pluck the high harmony on the first string. The resulting minor-sixth oblique bend is a twangy classic.

Until now, our oblique bends have consisted of a lower note stretched against a higher stationary tone. But as Ex. 2 illustrates, you can reverse the process and bend a high note against a sustaining lower tone. It's a tricky, but potent move. In this phrase, we're bending the third string a half-step or whole-step against the ringing fifth string. The secret is to *pull* the bend toward your feet (rather than push it toward your head, as we've previously done). You may find it too hard to pull a whole-step bend (bar 1, beats three and four) using only your 1st finger. If so, pull with your 2nd finger backed up with your 1st. Once you've mastered the descending series of sixth-to-seventh bends as written, try integrating them with some of the maneuvers in Ex.1.

Next time: Sliding sixths.

EX. 1



EX. 2